

THE ONE YEAR BIBLE Reading For December 19:

Zephaniah 1:1-3:20:

Zephaniah (= “Yahweh has hidden/protected”) was a descendant of Hezekiah (1:1) which is most likely King Hezekiah. Though little else is known about him apart from this book, his ministry took place during the days of King Josiah (1:1) who reigned from 640 B.C. to 609 B.C. Since Nineveh had not fallen yet (2:13), his ministry was before 612 B.C. The fact that he prophecies against the same sins Josiah addressed in his great reform (compare Zephaniah 1:4-6 with 2 Kings 23:4 and 2 Chronicles 34:1-7) suggests that Zephaniah’s ministry was prior to 621 B.C. (the year when Josiah’s reforms began).

The theme of the book is that “[Yahweh] is still firmly in control of all His world despite any contrary appearances, and He will prove this in the near future by inflicting terrible chastisement upon disobedient Judah, and complete destruction on the Gentile nations. Only by a timely repentance can this wrath be deferred.” (Gleason Archer, Survey Of Old Testament Introduction) This theme is worked out in the following manner: (1) Superscription. (1:1) (2) Prophecies of Judgment, including those against all nations (1:2-3); those against Judah (1:4-6); and a discussion of the coming Day Of The LORD (1:7-18). (3) A Call to Repentance. (2:1-3) (4) More Extensive Prophecies Against The Nations of Philistia, Moab and Ammon, Ethiopia, and Assyria. (2:4-15) (5) An Interlude Consisting Of Accusation Against Jerusalem. (3:1-5) (6) Summary Judgment Against All Nations. (3:6-8) (7) The Conversion of the Nations and the Restoration of the Purified Remnant Of Judah. (3:9-20)

One of the key points of application which arises from this book as Judah is denounced in the midst of denouncing the nations is that the background or ancestry we have will not save us. If we have grown up in a good, a religious, or even a Christian family, that will not save us. We are as lost as the most vile and pagan people in the world. We must turn to Jesus Christ and trust Him as our Savior and then we will know God’s certain future and reward. What is more, no matter who we are, if we call upon the name of the Lord to be saved, we will be saved (Psalm 86:5; Romans 10:13).

Revelation 10:1-11:

Revelation 10:1-11:14 contains an interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets. This interlude, like the one we saw in chapter seven, comes just before the last of a seven-part section and is very significant to the message of the book. Not only do we see God’s patient delay before He inflicts His final judgment, we also see in the first part of this interlude that God gives to John (and by implication to the Church during this period) strength to continue to proclaim His Word. The giving and eating of the little scroll (paralleling Daniel 10:5-6; Ezekiel 2:1-3:11), a scroll which was as sweet as honey (cf. Pss. 19:10; 119:103; Ezek. 2:3) is clearly depicting John taking in God’s Word, His message, which deals with “many peoples and nations and languages and kings” (10:11). It is sweet because it is the Word of God, yet it is bitter in the stomach since it deals with great wrath and judgment. John and the Church are being shown that the Lord will continue to give strength to the Church to proclaim His truth through this Church age.

Psalm 138:1-8:

Here David gives the LORD whole-hearted thanks for His steadfast love, faithfulness, and the fact that He has exalted above all things His name (reputation) and His word. Additionally, David rejoices since there will come a day when all the kings of the earth will give the LORD thanks for the words of the LORD's mouth. This seems to be an allusion to the time when those from every tribe, tongue, nation, and people will praise God (Revelation 5:9-10) and kings from all over the earth will be included (Revelation 21:24). Here is great fuel to throw on the fires of our worship before the LORD. Meditate upon these glorious truths and join David in giving God whole-hearted thanks and praise for the same things! Also, do not miss the prominent place given to God's Word and that a believer cannot take it lightly (see also Psalm 56:3-4)!

Proverbs 30:11-14:

Today's verses in Proverbs provide observations to the young person and/or the young believer that they might have understanding about people with whom they come in contact in the world. He teaches that there are people in the world who, in the context of all of Proverbs, do not fear God and seek the way of wisdom. These are people who: Do not honor their parents (11 [cf. Exodus 20:12]); who think they are fine (cleansed) before God, but are really not, they are false-professors of faith (12 [Matthew 7:21-24]); are arrogant (13 [cf. 1 Peter 5:5]); and finally have mouths like swords for what they say, paralleling what they do, demonstrates they hate and care nothing for others (14). These are four common themes in the Proverbs which serve as barometers in regard to whether or not a person is following the way of wisdom in the fear of God. The young person or young believer is not only warned against being this kind of person, but is also being warned about their dealings with these kinds of persons. The sense throughout the entire collection of Proverbs is to watch out for such people, for they are dangerous!